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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: ECUADOR SENDING ENGINEERS, TROOPS TO HAITI

1. The Government of Ecuador has directed that EC Army engineers and soldiers travel to Haiti to participate in UN-directed peacekeeping (PKO) operations and natural disaster (hurricane) relief. Embassy officials learned September 23 that the first Ecuadorian deployment will include 66 combat engineers, heading to the Caribbean October 16 as part of the Chilean contingent. A second EC deployment, numbering 220, also is likely, and might assume southern Haiti duties now handled by Uruguayan soldiers.

2. Ecuador's high command enthusiastically supports the humanitarian mission, and the Embassy believes its forces can handle the demanding assignment. Further, the EC joint command recently established an international peacekeeping training operation, and the UN just completed a PKO symposium in Ecuador.

3. COMMENT: We too support Ecuador's involvement in multilateral peacekeeping and disaster assistance operations. Experience gained working with the hemisphere's militaries in Haiti might even result in better cooperation with Colombia, a must if Ecuador desires an end to lawlessness and narcoterrorist incursions on its northern border. END COMMENT.
KENNEY